

## **FACT SHEET**

### **NEWARK-ELIZABETH RAIL LINK (NERL) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT(EIS) AND PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING (PE) PROJECTS**

NJ TRANSIT has recently initiated environmental impact statement preparation and preliminary engineering for prospective fixed-guideway transit system investments that would provide: links to Newark International Airport and major downtown centers in Newark and Elizabeth; transfers with the regional rail network; accessibility to potential development sites in Newark and Elizabeth; and improved downtown transit distribution service from regional commuter rail stations in the corridor.

The investments being studied include: the Newark-Elizabeth Rail Link (NERL), a 9 mile, 12-station light rail transit (LRT) line linking Newark to Elizabeth and configured as an extension of the Newark City Subway; a new rail station on the Northeast Corridor linked with Newark International Airport by a proposed extension of the on-airport monorail currently under construction; new light rail replacement cars for the Newark City Subway; a prospective light rail vehicle base facility and station(s) in Belleville and Bloomfield, shared by the Newark City Subway and the 9 mile extension; and a new multi-modal bus/rail terminal in midtown Elizabeth.

Light rail transit (LRT) is a modern version of the streetcars that once served Newark and all of northern New Jersey. LRT uses steel-wheeled vehicles running on steel rails and electrically powered from an overhead wire. They are quiet, non-polluting and provide a smooth, comfortable ride. Light rail transit differs from streetcar service in that LRT uses exclusive lanes on streets or private rights-of-way to avoid traffic congestion. The system will be fully accessible to disabled passengers. Since 1980, fourteen North American cities have built, or are building light rail systems.

The NERL EIS and PE project includes the development of preliminary engineering plans and specifications for the light rail transit investments. The environmental impact studies for NERL include nineteen areas of environmental, social and economic analysis covering transportation, the physical environment and the community environment. Beginning in December 1993, public meetings have been held to announce the scope of the project and seek public comments, encourage public participation in selection of alignments and station area planning workshops, and provide information to various groups about study progress. Public information meetings and workshops will be held at frequent intervals until completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in 1995, when public hearings will be conducted. The NERL EIS/PE project is being conducted by NJ TRANSIT under the auspices of the Federal Transit Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The EIS will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

The prospective rail station on the Northeast Corridor and on-airport monorail extension are also undergoing PE and EIS preparation under the auspices of the Federal Aviation Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation. Study efforts are being managed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Airport Access Program, in cooperation with NJ TRANSIT, which is responsible for design of the rail station. These studies are funded by the \$3.00 per boarding Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) currently being collected by the Port Authority at all three metropolitan area airports. PFC project funding could amount to over \$200 million at Newark International Airport.

NJ TRANSIT's Capital Program for Fiscal Years 1995-1999 envisions \$238 million of funding for the NERL project over the five-year program period. These funds would be used for design, land acquisition and construction of a first operable segment (FOS) of the proposed LRT line, procurement of light rail vehicles to operate the FOS, and construction of a new LRT base facility to be shared with the Newark City Subway. An additional \$48 million is programmed for replacement of the existing City Subway cars, which are nearly 50 years old.

Other related NJ TRANSIT initiatives under way include: preparation of a Newark Penn Station Area Master Plan Study in cooperation with the City of Newark; the Newark City Subway Fleet, Facility and Infrastructure Modernization Study; and the Mid-town Elizabeth Development Project conducted under the auspices of the City of Elizabeth and the NJ TRANSIT Real Estate Department. 4/22/94

